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ABSTRACT

As a part of the National Study of American Indian Education, this report deals with the urbanization of American Indians in the Los Angeles area, where the present Indian population consists almost entirely of people who have in-migrated within the last 35 years. It is noted that the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), with its relocation program for the Indian families, has assisted 8,000 heads of families or unmarried young adults to locate in the Los Angeles area during the years between 1953 and 1968 (an annual in-migration of about 1,300 per year, including all family members). However, it is reported that perhaps one-third of these in-migrants left the Los Angeles area. Of those remaining, the age distribution reflects a relatively large number of persons between 20 and 30 years old, which is a result of the BIA vocational training and relocation programs. Variables examined in the study include area of residence, tribal affiliation, occupations and socioeconomic status, age distribution, church role, and education. (EL)

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Final Report

INDIANS AND THEIR EDUCATION IN LOS ANGELES

Series II

No. 1

Robert J. Havighurst
March, 1970
The University of Chicago

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NATIONAL STUDY OF AMERICAN INDIAN EDUCATION

The attached paper is one of a number which make up the Final Report of the National Study of American Indian Education.

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The Final Report consists of five Series of Papers:

I. Community Backgrounds of Education in the Communities Which Have Been Studied.

II. The Education of Indians in Urban Centers.

III. Assorted Papers on Indian Education--mainly technical papers of a research nature.

IV. The Education of American Indians--Substantive Papers.

V. A Survey of the Education of American Indians.

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INDIANS AND THEIR EDUCATION IN LOS ANGELES

RJH
March, 1970

The urbanization of Indians may be seen in all its diversity in the Los Angeles city and metropolitan area. The process has been most active since 1950, and more so in the 60s than in the 50s. The census showed 3,700 Indians in Los Angeles and its metropolitan area in 1950, and 12,400 in 1960. Estimates of the number in 1969-70 vary from 35,000 to 45,000 with the more conservative estimate probably closer to reality.

The picture presented here comes largely from several sample interview and questionnaire studies made in 1965 and 1966, together with a week's field study by the writer in October, 1969. Indian individuals who were studied in the survey were generally people who were members or participants of social centers or churches that are operated mainly for and by Indians. The largest number of persons (adults and children) for whom data were given is 2,945. Consequently, the data can hardly be considered representative. From experience with such attempts at getting a representative sample in Chicago, we should infer that two principal groups are overlooked. One is the very large group with the lowest incomes, the least stable employment and family structure--possibly a third of the total Indian population. The other is the quite small group of relatively high income, white-collar people who have merged into the conglomerate of middle-class life in a large city. Therefore, the "Indian community" as pictured here is the 60 percent who are most stable in residence, occupation, and "Indian-ness."

In-migration of Indians

The present Indian population of the Los Angeles area consists almost entirely of people who have migrated into the area in the last 35 years, with their children who were born in this area. These people are mostly from outside of California, although a few Indian people have come into the area from the several small reservations in Southern California.

Several hundred Indians, at least, came to Los Angeles during the 1930s and early 1940s, from Oklahoma, as part of the great migration of poor people from Oklahoma and neighboring areas during the Depression years. Many of

their families have fared well, economically, and are settled in the various suburban areas of Los Angeles.

The post-war in-migration was stimulated by the decision made under the Eisenhower administration to encourage and assist Indians to leave the reservations for employment in urban centers. For this purpose the Bureau of Indian Affairs set up a number of Field Employment Assistance Offices, one of the more active being the Los Angeles office. Indian families were assisted financially to come to the city and to find employment. Between 1953 and 1968 the Los Angeles office assisted 8,000 heads of families or unmarried young adults to locate in the Los Angeles area. With their family members, this meant an annual in-migration of about 1300 per year. Not all of these people stayed. Perhaps a third of them left Los Angeles. As evidence for this there was a study made by the Navaho Tribal Agency which found that, between 1952 and 1961, 3273 Navahos were "relocated" by the BIA, but 37 percent returned to the reservation.

Commencing in 1958 the Bureau of Indian Affairs operated a program of vocational training of Indian adults, with subsistence grants for as much as a year or two, while the individual was in training. This program in Los Angeles involved an average of 550 adults per year since 1965. These people, with their families, numbered about 6000 between 1958 and 1968. Many of them remained in Los Angeles to live after completing their training.

The people relocated and trained were largely Navaho, Pueblo, Sioux, Cheyenne, Chippewa, Blackfeet, and Apache. This is reflected in the data from the survey on the proportions who came first to Los Angeles on the BIA programs: approximately 50 percent of the respondents who came from Arizona, New Mexico, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota, while 30 percent of the Oklahoma Indians came under these programs.

Area of Residence

The map shows the places in the Los Angeles area where most of the Indian families live. They are quite widely distributed. Wherever an X shows on the map, there were at least 30 people from the sample survey, which included only 8 to 10 percent of the Indians in Los Angeles. The shaded areas are places of relatively high concentration, though there are no areas as large as a city block which contain a majority of Indians.

Burbank

Glendale

Pasadena

Santa Monica

City Center

Indians are concentrated in areas shaded or marked X

Bell Gardens

Riverside

Long Beach

Location of Indian Residence in the Los Angeles Area

RJH-69

The map shows two principal areas of residence. One is a low-rent area of approximately 4 square miles just west of the City Center. This area is bounded by Western Avenue, Beverly Boulevard, Figueroa Street, and Pico Boulevard. This is a kind of "port of entry." It has a number of old two and three-storey wooden houses which have been cut up into small dwelling units. In this area are located several "Indian churches," and several "Indian bars."

The other area of relatively concentrated residence is the small city of Bell Gardens, several miles south and east of the city center. This area was originally and still is largely populated by Anglos from Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Texas. Nine percent of the sample resided in Bell Gardens. Two Indian churches are located there, including the Indian Revival Center (Assemblies of God) which is the largest and most active Indian congregation in the Los Angeles area. This is the most stable residential area. It is a working-class community, with small bungalows ten to thirty years old, and a few trailer courts and one-storey court-apartment complexes. To the ordinary person this seems to be an ideal place to raise children. The Oklahoma Anglo character is still well preserved, as is indicated by the abundance of fundamentalist Protestant churches. A walk from one elementary school to its nearest neighbor took the writer past four churches: two Pentecostal, one Assembly of God, and one Bible Christian.

There is a good deal of transiency in this area. The schools report about a 50 percent change in the school population in a given year. There is some in-migration of Mexican-Americans, but Anglos are also coming into the community. The Indian population has come partly because of BIA relocation practice, but also because the churches attract a stable working-class Indian group from other parts of the area.

In addition to these areas of relative concentration, the sample survey showed a wide distribution of Indian families in many other community areas. One percent or more of the sample were residing in: Compton, Cudahy, Norwalk, Huntington Park, Maywood, Paramount, Whittier, Glendale, Pasadena, El Monte, Burbank, Inglewood, Hawthorns, Artesia, Gardena. On the map, the locations of most of these communities are marked with an X.

Tribal Affiliation

A total of 101 tribes were named in the survey, but the majority of these were represented only by 1 to 10 persons. On the other hand, there were larger numbers of Navaho, Sioux, Cherokee, Creek, Pueblo, Choctaw, with the following percentages respectively: 14, 12, 6, 6, 5, 5.

Occupations and Socioeconomic Status

From a sample of 681 households, the following occupational data were obtained, for males: professional, 5 percent; skilled, 32 percent; unskilled, 40 percent; unemployed, 10 percent; student, 9 percent. This is similar to the occupational distribution of the sample studied in Chicago. Probably a truly representative sample would increase the proportion of unskilled and unemployed men. Many of the adults in this sample (40 percent were under 25) were too young to have school-age children.

Age Distribution. The adult Indian population is relatively young, due to the in-migration of many young people since 1960. The sample of 319 married persons reported 3.2 children per family, which is slightly higher than the figure for white families in the western states. (These, of course, are not completed families in most cases.)

The age distribution of all Indians in the Los Angeles area is peculiar, due to the large number of young adults who have come for training and employment. These young adults are having children, most of whom are of elementary school age or younger. There is a relatively large number of young adults in the 20-30 range, and relatively few people over 30. This is a result of the BIA training and relocation programs.

Churches

An especially important fact about Los Angeles Indians is the large number of churches which serve Indians almost exclusively. There were in 1966 ten predominantly Indian churches, nine of them Protestant fundamentalist and one Mormon. The church preferences noted in the survey were as follows:

Catholic	29 percent
None	18 percent
Baptist	14 percent
Indian Revival Center	7 percent
Latter Day Saints	5 percent

Methodist	5 percent
Presbyterian	3 percent
Assembly of God	3 percent
Episcopal	2 percent
Native American	1 percent
Congregational	1 percent

In any program for improvement of social and family life, it appears that the churches may be more important than they might be in other cities. Most of them have active youth programs, which tend to keep the young people "out of trouble." The churches probably give strength to the stable working-class structure of the population.

Schooling of Indian Children and Youth

The Los Angeles City Schools serve the majority of Indian children, but there are a number of suburban school districts which also have considerable Indian enrollments. The Bell Gardens area is in the Montebello School District.

The public schools make an annual "ethnic count," in which the teachers report the numbers of children of various ethnic groups, as judged by the teachers. Teachers are instructed not to ask children their race. The data for the Los Angeles City schools are summarized in Table 1. When data are collected in this way, the Indian group is likely to be under-counted, since a number of quarter-blood children have blue eyes and blonde skin color. The Mexican-Americans are differentiated from Indians by the classroom teacher by counting all those with Spanish surnames. This facilitates the counting of Indian children, whose appearance is often very much like that of Mexicans. However, it includes some Indian children as Mexican, where an Indian woman has married a Mexican man.

As Table 1 shows, the Los Angeles City school system reported 1192 Indian pupils in 1968 and 1014 in 1969. Most of them are attending one or another of 12 elementary schools, seven junior high and three senior high schools. The Bell Gardens schools have perhaps 250 Indian pupils. The apparent decrease in the Los Angeles Indian enrollment from 1968 to 1969 may not be a true one. The ethnic count is obviously uncertain for Indians, who may be difficult for teachers to identify.

Examination of the ethnic data indicates that there are more pupils with Spanish surnames than there are Indian pupils in every school attended by Indians. Thus the problems of educating Indian children in Los Angeles

(and probably other southwestern cities) are interlaced with the problems of educating Chicano children.

Brief interviews with six school principals and several classroom teachers indicated that the principals and teachers have a generally favorable view of Indian pupils. They regard these children as quite obedient and well-behaved, and possibly too passive in the classroom. They report that Chicano children and their parents are likely to be more aggressive about school matters, and to have something of a "chip on the shoulder" attitude.

The Los Angeles principals and teachers reported that their Indian pupils were about average, with some very bright children and some slow ones. They also reported that art is a favorite subject with Indian children, and some of them do very well in high school elective art courses.

There was not much interest on the part of the Los Angeles and Montebello teachers in curriculum materials dealing explicitly with Indian history and culture. They generally felt that units now in use in social studies, history, and literature present an adequate picture of the American Indian and his adaptation to white culture.

The Young Indian Adult. Several people spoke of the adjustment problems of Indian young adults who come for training or for their first steady employment. Some of these young people frequent the Indian bars at Third and Main, and in the Alvorado section, west of the city center, and tend to get in trouble. Others of them become attached to church groups. The school system does not seem to attract them to its adult education program, though Los Angeles has one of the better programs of adult education in the country. There were 117 Indians registered in the adult education program of the Los Angeles schools in 1969. Since so many of the young Indians are there for vocational training, they may not care for more education after their training sessions.

Table 1

INDIAN STUDENTS IN LOS ANGELES AND BELL GARDENS CITY SCHOOLS

1968-1969

	Level	No. of Schools with 8 or more Indian Pupils	Indian	Negro	Oriental	Spanish Surnames	Total
			Los Angeles City Schools				
	Elementary	12	711	90,773	12,982	75,546	370,903
1968	Junior Hi.	5	216	31,981	4,982	24,509	143,354
	Senior Hi.	9	265	23,932	5,177	25,336	134,320
	Elementary	9	631	90,552	11,441	82,698	363,792
1969	Junior Hi.	7	179	33,502	5,030	26,906	145,135
	Senior Hi.	3	204	28,259	5,366	25,854	141,397
			Bell Gardens, Montebello School District				
	Elementary	5	159		31	872	5,036
1968	Junior Hi.	1	46		7	232	1,593
	Senior Hi.*	2	26		215	1,915	4,662
	Elementary	5	170		32	1,121	5,167
1969	Junior Hi.	1	58		4	241	1,634
	Senior Hi.*	2	46		193	2,152	4,749

* Bell Gardens Senior High and Montebello Senior High Schools

Source: Los Angeles Public Schools, Racial and Ethnic Survey, Fall, 1968, 1969.
Montebello Unified School District, Private Communication.

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